

# THE DANGER OF HALFHEARTEDNESS

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## Text: II Kings 13:14-19

■ Theodore Roosevelt wrote, “It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

-- Theodore Roosevelt. Leadership, Vol. 15, no. 3.

Joash obviously lacked faith; but he certainly did not lack opportunity. And the opportunity—if ceased—would have increased his faith and helped his people. The prophet knew that Joash was weak in his faith and therefore he attempted to give him the visual assurance that should have given Joash that boost that he needed. There was great spiritual symbolism in the shooting of the arrows. It would speak volumes about how much God would be able to do for Joash. But when the time came for him to participate with the plan of God, Joash proved to be timid or halfhearted. Sadly, he would never know the thrill of complete victory over his enemies.

HALFHEARTEDNESS can be described as: indecision or doublemindedness - a lack of enthusiasm sometimes because of the lack of a clear goal. HALFHEARTEDNESS causes the heart, the head and the hands to hang down. HALFHEARTEDNESS, although common, understandable and explainable—whether a result of fatigue, disappointment or disillusionment—is still above all DANGEROUS!

Note with me several *reasons* why halfheartedness is so dangerous to our soul.

## I. WE CANNOT PLEASE GOD WHEN WE ARE HALFHEARTED.

Hebrews 11:6 *"But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."*

A. When we are halfhearted, we are **filled with doubt**.

1. We will doubt that God hears us when we pray.
2. We will doubt that situations will get any better.

B. When we are halfhearted we are **never totally committed**.

■ Vance havner said, ‘A "halfway Christian" works both sides of the street. He is religious because it helps him in business and gives him a self-righteous satisfaction. But he has no intention of making Jesus Lord of his life. Yet our Lord said He would rather a man be cold, utterly without profession to be Christian, rather than medium, lukewarm, "moderate."’

-- Vance Havner, from The Vance Havner Quote Book/On This Rock I Stand. Christianity Today, Vol.30,no.16.

## II. WHEN WE ARE HALFHEARTED WE ONLY WIN PARTIAL VICTORIES.

A. Joash did only about half of what he should have.

■ “If a man is centered upon himself, the smallest risk is too great for him, because both success and failure can destroy him. If he is centered upon God, then no risk is too great, because success is already guaranteed--the successful union of creator and creature, beside which everything else is meaningless.”

-- Morris L. West in The Shoes of the Fisherman. Christianity Today, Vol.33,no.3.

B. He prevailed only about half as many times as he could have.

■ “Fear doesn't want you to make the journey to the mountain. If he can rattle you enough, fear will persuade you to take your eyes off the peaks and settle for a dull existence in the flatlands.”

-- Max Lucado, Christian Reader, Vol.32,no.3.

Perhaps Joash had the attitude that many have, “Some victories are better than none.” But I say, “**Not when God promised you all the victories!**” The flatlands may be OK to some, but they're not for me when God promised us a mountain.

### III. WHEN WE ARE HALFHEARTED OUR BLESSING IS LIMITED.

■ James 1:6-7 *"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."*

A. Being halfhearted will never bring us the spiritual victory that we need.

Notice that the people in the Bible to whom we look to for a spiritual example are people who were wholehearted in their service to God. They received because they believed wholeheartedly.

- Abraham - **went out** to a strange country wholehearted
- Joshua and Caleb - **went forth** into the promised land wholehearted
- David **praised and repented** wholehearted
- Esther **risked her life** wholeheartedly
- Job **trusted** in the face of despair wholeheartedly.
- Paul - **fought the good fight of faith** wholehearted

We can have **limited blessings or unlimited blessings**—it depends on us. Unlimited blessing come to those who follow the plan of God wholehearted.

B. Being halfhearted will never bring us the spiritual happiness we need.

■ William Law writes, “To love God wholeheartedly, we must be convinced that our only happiness is in him alone. We cannot believe this until we renounce all other efforts at happiness. If we look to God to supply half our happiness, we can only love him with half our hearts.”

-- William Law in *Christian Perfection* (a contemporary version by Marvin D. Hinten). *Christianity Today*, Vol.36,no.

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## CONCLUSION

■ “An estimated 500,000 tons of water rush over Niagara Falls every minute. On March 29, 1948, the falls suddenly stopped. People living within the sound of the falls were awakened by the overwhelming silence. They believed it was a sign that the world was coming to an end. It was thirty hours before the rush of water resumed.

What happened? Heavy winds had set the ice fields of Lake Erie in motion. Tons of ice jammed the Niagara River entrance near Buffalo and stopped the flow of the river until the ice shifted again.

The flow of God's grace in our lives can be blocked by cold indifference.”

-- Merle Mees in *Fresh Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching* (Baker), from the editors of *Leadership*.

The *reasons* why our halfheartedness is so dangerous is obvious. Think of the miracles that could have been seen, the souls that could have been won, the influence that we could have had on others. Halfheartedness is a tragedy in the making. In fact, when we get to heaven I believe that we will see that one of the greatest tragedies of our existence here on earth will be the things that we could have done and should have done for God.

***Don't wait until later or until a better time. Get in the arena and fight!***